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**Hartlepool Learning and Skills Service**

**Fee Policy**

**– 2020/21**

**Funded by Tees Valley Combined Authority**

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**Agreed by:** Patrick Wilson, Head of Service

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**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for Hartlepool Learning & Skills Service in relation to the Fee Policy for 2020-21.

This is to ensure that:

* Fees are levied appropriately and consistently;
* The Service is operating in accordance with the requirements of Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA).

**2. Overview**

Hartlepool Learning & Skills Service’s Adult Education Budget is funded by both TVCA and the ESFA. The Service reviews the Fees Policy annually in line with Adult Education Budget Funding Rules to ensure compliance with any variations in the funding regulations and to support our objectives, as outlined within the Strategy 2016-2026.

Hartlepool Learning & Skills Service offers a wide range of courses which have been created in response to local need. Fees for accredited Adult Skills courses are calculated based on eligibility and circumstances of a learner on the first day of their course and are under three bands:

* **Full Fee:** The full fee must be paid by the learner, employer or through a successful application for an Advanced Learner Loan.
* **Co-Funded:** There is a 50% fee reduction with half of the costs paid by the learner or employer and the other half funded.
* **Free/Fully Funded:** The course is 100% funded.

**3. Fully Funded Learners**

The following categories of learners undertaking funded learning aims below Level 3, will be entitled to full funding of their fees, subject to satisfactory evidence of status being provided at enrolment as part of the Enrolment Process:

* Aged 19-23 and undertaking a first full level 2 or 3 qualification (for this category the age at which the learner starts the learning aim applies and not their age at the start of the academic year).
* Aged 19 and older who is unemployed undertaking a course up to Level 2 and/or is a dependant of a person in receipt of:
  + Job Seeker Allowance (JSA)
  + Employment Support Allowance (WRAG)
  + Universal Credit (Work Group, Work Related Requirement, Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview)
* Aged 19 and older who is enrolling on English and maths, up to and including level 2 and has not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 or higher.
* Aged 19 and older who is enrolling on Information technology ‘digital’ skills, up to and including level 1, and has their digital skills assessed at below level 1.
* Aged 19 and older who is employed earning less than £17,004.00 undertaking a course up to Level 2. Learners must provide evidence such as a wage slip within 3 months of the learner’s learning start date. It could also be a current employment contract which states Gross Monthly/Annual Wage.

**4. Co-Funded Learners**

The learner would be co-funded if they are 19 or over studying funded learning aims below Level 3, who do not meet any of the fully funded criteria. These learners are referred to as ‘co-funded’ because ESFA or TVCA only provides funding of 50% of the full funding value as shown on the Learning Aims Record Service (LARS).

The cost to the learner would be 50% of the fully funded rate for new provision.

**5. Community Learning**

The purpose of Community Learning funded provision is to widen adult participation in learning through a targeted approach, promoting equality and diversity, and improving access to learning for particular under-represented groups and for those who have not been engaged in learning for a significant period of time.

All courses delivered through Community Learning which are classified as either ‘Learning for Work’ or ‘Learning for Health’ will be completely free for all learners. These are courses which support learners to improve their health and well-being, including mental health, access formal learning linked to their career ambitions and progress into sustained employment.

Any courses which would be classified as ‘Learning for Leisure’ will have a set fee for all learners with no remissions available. These charges will be dependent on the hours for the course with three funding bands available:

* 8 Hours or Less - £10 Cost
* 20 Hours or Less – £25 Cost
* More than 20 Hours – £35 Cost

The Hartlepool Learning & Skills Service also has the discretion to develop courses through Community Learning for a specific cohort of learners through a partnership with internal or external stakeholders such as other Council Departments.

**6. Course Cancellation**

Hartlepool Learning & Skills Service will refund fees in full if we close a course in the first two weeks or cancel a course before it starts. If we cancel a course(s) prior to the start date and we are unable to provide a suitable alternative, learners will be entitled to a full refund of the fees. If we change a course venue, dates or times and the alternative offered is unsuitable for the learner, a full refund will also be given.

**7. Instalment Payments**

Payment of fees can be made by instalments for courses with fees greater than £50.

To pay through instalments the course being delivered must be for more than one term. If so, 50% of the first term cost must be paid upfront and all remaining costs at least two months prior to the end date for the course.

**8. Exam Fees**

All normal examination fees are included in the course fees and also cover the learner for one re-sit if required. Any learner who requests an additional re-sit will be required to pay the examination fees in advance and will be invoiced for the cost.

**9. Invoice Payments**

Payment of fees can be made by invoice for courses with fees greater than £50 and if the full cost upfront may provide the learner with financial difficulty.

To pay through invoice the course being delivered must only be for one term. If so, 50% of the first term cost must be paid upfront and all remaining costs at least two months prior to the end date for the course.

**10. Learner Support**

Learners who are in hardship and meet specific eligibility criteria may be able to get assistance from the Learner Support Funds. The purpose is to provide general financial support for vulnerable and financially disadvantaged learners. Financial support may include items such as transport, childcare and other course-related costs including books and equipment and in exceptional circumstances could fund course costs.

There are strict rules and guidance around the usage of learner support and if you require further information then contact the service on 01429 868616.